

MEDIA RELEASE



18 December 2017

New restrictions on after hours home doctors will hurt carers

"Carers Australia is very disappointed by the Government's announcement today of changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) that will reduce access to home visits," said Ara Cresswell, CEO of Carers Australia.

"Many people who have care needs, including serious illnesses or disabilities have mobility problems, making it difficult to leave the home. There are 860,000 primary family and friend carers in Australia, with more than a third who frequently spend 40 or more hours a week caring. Many care for more than one person."

"Carers are often faced with overwhelming obstacles to getting the person with care needs to ER – where they may have to wait for several hours. Added to that, carers will often go without meeting their own needs for medical attention when they cannot find someone to replace them at home."

"The Government's announcement follows the recommendation of the MBS Review Taskforce on Urgent after hours primary care services, in October 2017, to restrict full MBS rebates to GPs who work predominantly within usual business hours."

"Carers Australia points out that few GPs who work in practices during the day are willing to provide home visits, that carers and people with care needs are unlikely to select a GP based on their availability to offer home visits – or even know if the GP offers that service."

"Following this announcement, carers who call an after hours service for a home visit will face high out of pocket expenses. With 43 per cent of carers receiving government payments as their main source of income, and the average median income of carers 46 per cent below the general population, they cannot afford this extra expense."

"There are other ways to address concerns about the quality and costs of dedicated after hours medical services without restricting access by some of the most vulnerable people in the community."

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